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ABSTRACT

Of the many specific situations in which the exercise of suasory influence may be necessary to assure that a decision making group meets its analytical responsibilities, five appear to be particularly important. These are circumstances in which (1) a group is violating accepted procedural norms, (2) an authority figure or high status group member is exerting undue and improper influence on the course of a discussion, (3) the majority is inappropriately exerting pressure for uniformity, (4) members of the group are displaying inferential deficiencies, and (5) participants are basing judgments on stereotypic thinking. These situations suggest that suasory influence is more appropriate under circumstances in which the interests of rational choice can be furthered. Suasory intervention, however, could well worsen an already undesirable situation. Efforts to reorient group members toward a decisional act may be so subtle as to go unnoticed, so weakly stated as to go unheeded, or so direct as to arouse animosity toward the initiator. A potentially fruitful area for future research, therefore, is the examination of the relative effectiveness of alternative modes of suasory influence. (HOD)

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THE SUASORY FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE PROCESS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING: NECESSITY AND PARADOX

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Speech Communication Association Convention
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THE PROBLEM

For those who have concerned themselves with decision-making discussion as a form of inquiry, distinguishing it as such from advocacy and other types of suasory influence, the recognition that the ideal of pure reflection is unattainable poses something of a pedagogical, if not philosophical, problem.[1] On the one hand, we seek to have our students understand the need for resolving the issues to which their discussions are addressed as dispassionately as possible. On the other hand, we are forced to acknowledge that frequently the only way of achieving acceptable closure on the question a decision-making group confronts is through one or more participants' persuasive skills. Hence, the reality of group life in the context of decision-making is that a species of communication considered to be inimical to the goal of discovering the most appropriate answer to a question may be essential to its attainment. And therein lies the paradox to which this essay is addressed.

This paradox was at the base of many distinctions that early students of the subject attempted to draw between discussion and other kinds of communication and was often a source of controversy between "purists" and "realists."[2] With the wide circulation and broad acceptance of the notion that all communication is persuasive, the promotion of process-oriented views of communicative behavior in its many and varied contexts, and the preoccupation with social influence that ushered in the 1960s, however, concern about the unique-

ness of discussion began to wane and all but disappeared.[3] It became the fashion to assume that communication would function persuasively in decision-making groups. Of interest, therefore, was understanding the dynamics of the process. Such a view was undoubtedly given further impetus by the growing challenge to the efficacy of positivist thinking and the scientific model on which previously held rationalist assumptions about decision-making in general, and group decision-making especially, had been predicated.[4] At least for a time, then, the compatibility of suasory influence and the objectives of group decision-making was not at issue.

Notwithstanding the wave of realism that overswept the seemingly antiquarian rationalistic view of inquiry in the 1960s and early 70s, the problem began to resurface as research on social influence continued to reveal unfortunate connections between suasory processes and the quality of judgment often exhibited by the members of decision-making groups.[5] One of the more compelling demonstrations of the relationship was the work of Irving Janis who carefully assembled a set of factors from theory and research that proved useful in accounting for a series of fiascoes in United States foreign policy decisions.[6] In every case, some type of suasory influence appeared to play a causal role in a group's inability to make intelligent decisions. To prevent the occurrence of such failures in judgment, Janis recommended a body of principles that he and Leon Mann subsequently formalized as a problem-solving sequence that closely resembles John Dewey's familiar reflective thinking model.[7] Although Janis and Mann's guides to vigilance in decisional acts are by no means doctrinaire in their underlying rationalist/objectivist assumptions, they nevertheless appear to be very close to the principles espoused by the early proponents of discussion and reflect the notion that effective decision-making in groups is more likely to occur when the activity is viewed as a form

of inquiry rather than as a forum for the promulgation of individual preferences, with the group's final choice being that of the most skillful or powerful advocate of a given point of view.

The difficulty with Janis and Mann's correctives and those of their precursors is that they make no provision for dealing with the sort of situation in which the members of a decision-making group are failing to manifest the qualities of mind that an objective, rationalistic approach to decision-making embodies. It is one thing to suggest how a group might most profitably go about the task of making an informed choice and another to have confidence that it will. Even if one adopts Janis' suggestion that groups establish the practice of appointing someone to play the role of critical evaluator, first, there is no guarantee that he or she will, and second, there is no assurance that the person so designated will be equipped to discharge his or her responsibilities in the manner prescribed.[8]

For the practitioner, then, a knowledge of the steps and states of mind that promote optimum choice in decisional contexts is insufficient. He or she must be able to create the conditions that foster the possibilities for a group's acting in a rational manner when the other participants are failing to demonstrate that they have such an inclination. Effecting the transformation requires an exercise of suasory influence. Hence, the paradox remains, but as I hope to establish, it need not be disconcerting.

For those who can accept the necessity of suasory influence in what ideally would be an enterprise free of such a quality, the real issue involves the sorts of interventions that one should be prepared to make and the matters to which they are most appropriately directed. In my judgment, it is possible to draw a line, however fine it may sometimes be, between promotive functions of suasory influence and those detracting from the objective of rational choice. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to identify situations arising in de-

cision-making discussions for which the exercise of suasory influence not only is justifiable but perhaps essential to the ability of participants to choose intelligently. A secondary purpose is to suggest some of the difficulties involved in applying such influence legitimately as well as effectively.

As a general principle, one could maintain that suasory influence in decision-making discussions is warranted whenever the behavior of any group member appears to reduce the probability of the group's making the most appropriate choice among the alternatives it is considering.[9] Since any behavior conceivably could leave this appearance, the number of possible situations in which one might therefore consider functioning in a suasory manner is virtually limitless. The principle as stated, then, is too general to have much value for judging when it is most desirable for one to consider suasory intervention. Of greater aid to the practitioner would be a survey of typical circumstances in the life of groups for which there is reason to believe that associated patterns of individual and collective behavior are likely to diminish the prospects for rational influences to be operative. To this task, I shall now direct my attention.

THE PROPER DOMAIN OF SUASORY INFLUENCE IN DECISION-MAKING DISCUSSIONS

Of the many specific situations in which the exercise of suasory influence may be necessary to assure that a decision-making group meets its analytical responsibilities, five appear to be particularly important. These include circumstances in which (1) a group is violating accepted procedural norms, (2) an authority figure or high status group member is exerting undue and improper influence on the course of a discussion, (3) the majority is inappropriately exerting pressure for uniformity, (4) members of the group are displaying inferential deficiencies, and (5) participants are basing judgments on stereotypic thinking. Regardless of the precipitating factor, the consequence in

each of these cases is the same. There will be a reduced likelihood of the group's deciding as it should. I trust that, if not already obvious, the point will become clear in the subsequent analysis of the five situations mentioned.[10]

Violations of Procedural Norms

Although no one to my knowledge has demonstrated a best sequence for successful decision-making, it is clear from previous inquiries that the failure to deal with issues in some systematic fashion can contribute to the exercise of poor judgment.[11] Despite individual members' range of tolerance for variations in procedural order, the failure of a group to observe any overall plan for disposing of the issues related to the choices it is considering only can serve to increase the likelihood of the final choice's being the wrong one.[12]

The preceding concern is at the base of many attempts to identify procedures that facilitate judgment through the clarification of issues and the determination of what the information consulted has revealed about each.[13] Although such standard agendas are by no means guarantees of a group's making the right choice, as Janis and Mann have noted, they serve to clarify problem requirements and the evaluation of the adequacy with which an individual or group has met those requirements.[14] Therefore, whenever a group member's behavior fosters a non-systematic approach to the resolution of a discussion question, anyone aware of what is occurring should attempt to rectify the situation by convincing other group members of the need to bring order to what otherwise is becoming a chaotic analysis of discussion issues.

Undue Influence of Authority Figures and High Status Group Members

The problem posed by the undue influence of group members in positions of authority and high status, while sometimes overstated, is nevertheless one about which we need to be mindful. We are becoming increasingly aware of the harmful impact that such individuals can and do have in studies of the powerful.[15]

This is not to suggest that anyone who occupies a position of authority or high status is inherently untrustworthy, but neither should one assume that these sorts of individuals are necessarily capable of exercising judgment superior to that of others having less power or lower status. The unfortunate fact, however, is that members of many decision-making groups often act in accordance with such an unreasonable assumption.

According to Crosbie, the characteristic pattern of communication of lower status individuals to those possessing higher status is one of ingratiation and deference, whereas in the reverse situation, the pattern is one of debasement.[16] Although one may wish to question the universality of Crosbie's characterizations, other research would appear to be generally supportive of his claims.[17] Moreover, French has suggested that in hierarchically organized groups, the final judgment has a higher probability of being the most powerful member's than that of any other participant.[18] Theoretically, the most powerful group member's judgment would always prevail.

Because communication functions to reinforce the influence of authority figures and the members of a group having high status, this condition increases the chances that any deficiencies in judgment such individuals display will be those of the group as a whole.[19] One need only be reminded of such historical events as the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Watergate coverup, and the rescue of the Mayaguez to appreciate the seriousness of the problems to which the authority and status structure of decision-making groups can lead.[20]

As a result of this ever-present potential, it seems advisable that one attempt to apply suasory influence on such occasions that an authority figure or high status group member appears to be exercising influence that is counter to the precepts of informed, objective judgment. In this situation, one would probably not be successful in trying to persuade others to disregard the source of the problem. Of more probable success would be a strategy that emphasizes

the need for thoroughness in the evaluation of information and the alternatives to which it refers. The purpose of reacting at all is not to discredit particular individuals, but to ensure the satisfactory performance of functions crucial to the group's success.

Pressure for Uniformity

Another aspect of group life that can interfere with a decision-making group's ability to pursue its task thoroughly and dispassionately is the natural tendency for those who share opinions on issues to perceive the similarity as the sort of consensual validation that makes their opinions correct in some objective sense.[21] When this type of mentality arises, an individual not in line with the emerging group consensus is very likely to be subjected to pressure for uniformity.[22] If the individual fails to yield to this pressure, he or she often faces social disapproval, if not outright rejection by the other group members.[23]

Social disapproval and rejection, of course, are not the inevitable outcomes of continued opposition to a majority; however, many of us are reluctant to take the risk of finding out and, hence, will succumb to the will of the majority.[24] This type of acquiescence occasionally has rather chilling implications. Loftus cites a case involving the controversial conviction of two brothers for first degree murder, in which three jurors who felt the defendants to be innocent yielded to the pressure of the majority so that the trial could come to an end.[25] This is not to suggest that the verdict was wrong, but since presumably there were grounds for questioning the majority opinion, one must wonder whether the interests of the impartial administration of justice were very well served in this particular incident.

Because of the kind of situation described above and others like it, it seems clear to me that when one senses that majority sentiments are serving as a substitute for the critical examination of ideas and evidence pertinent to

the issues a group is exploring, then it is not only appropriate, but perhaps a matter of obligation, that he or she take steps to rectify the problem. Rather than taking a defensive posture, as we are often prone to do in these circumstances, however, an offensive strategy is perhaps preferable. At least, this would appear to be the implication of several studies of deviant influence.[26] The strategy, moreover, should emphasize the need for observing task requirements rather than supporting given positions on the issue(s) in dispute.

Displays of Inferential Deficiencies

Since information is the substance from which the members of decision-making groups draw the inferences on which the answers to discussion questions depend, it is important that these types of collective judgments be as accurate--at least, as appropriate--as possible. As Nisbett and Ross, among others, have indicated, however, our inferential abilities in many instances are suspect.[27] In addition, in light of what is known about human information processing capacities, there is reason to believe that the effect of communication in decision-making groups is sometimes to exacerbate rather than obviate the problem of individual inferential error.[28] Even though advances in the electronic processing of information promise to ease the difficulties with some aspects of human judgment, such decisional support systems will remain only a partial remedy.[29]

In a recent descriptive study of responses to questionable inferences made by members of decision-making groups, I found a recurrent pattern consisting of reinforcement, extension of the original inference, and the introduction of further questionable inferences. In over 80 instances, only once was the acceptability of an inference challenged. The challenge, moreover, lost all force within the span of two further reactions. How typical this pattern of response to questionable inferences may be I am not prepared to say. What the

study does serve to illustrate, however, is the fact that on many occasions, not only will unwarranted inferences enter into a discussion, but that communication among the members of the discussion group can serve to strengthen their credibility.[30]

To the extent that such inferences make up the fabric from which groups cut their decisions, the display of inferential deficiencies should be a matter of serious concern, one that surely indicates the need for suasory influence whenever a group member who is sensitive to the problem finds less than adequate warrant for the inferences others are drawing from the information they have available. There is nothing wrong with observing that participants are reaching conclusions prematurely or that they have an insufficient basis for their judgments when, in fact, they are guilty of such inadequacies or with reminding them of the informational requirements that their judgments must satisfy.

Stereotyped Thinking

Closely related to the problem of inferential deficiencies is the stereotyped thinking that intrudes upon a group's efforts to reach decisions. That we harbor stereotypes is well documented in social research as is the fact that they do affect decisions.[31] The particular difficulty that stereotypes pose is that on a superficial level, the conclusions they suggest often seem quite reasonable. When cast into a syllogistic form, a stereotype can serve the function of a major premise. If that premise goes unquestioned, then the specific deductions made from it will appear defensible.[32] This may well be at the base of the higher conviction rates among minority group members as compared to those of non-minorities that have been consistently noted.[33] In fact, Davis et al., in a study of bias in mock juries, uncovered a pattern of verdicts consistent with jurors' general beliefs about the probable guilt or innocence of individuals accused of the specific crime involved in the case they were considering.[34]

Because stereotypes usually represent strongly held beliefs that have been socially conditioned and reinforced over long periods of time, they are very difficult to break. The concern of a decision-maker, however, should be not so much with stereotypes themselves, but with their consequences for the choices that groups make. As a result, the question of suasory intervention becomes salient at the point a stereotype or stereotyped thinking begins to affect the ability of group members to draw appropriate conclusions about the particular set of issues they are discussing. Should this condition be manifest in the interaction of a group, then one can justifiably attempt to demonstrate the inadequacy of the generalizations from which the participants are drawing conclusions or that they are otherwise using inappropriately as bases of judgment.

CAVEAT

I trust that it is clear from the preceding overview that the role I envision for the exercise of suasory influence in decision-making discussions is a limited one that should come into play only in response to certain exigences in a group's interactional environment. Specifically, suasory influence is most appropriate under circumstances in which the interests of rational choice can be furthered. In singling out the five types of situations mentioned above, I have tried to bring some degree of definition to the legitimate domain of suasory influence. Despite that effort, I appreciate the need for flexibility in making judgments about the propriety of particular kinds of suasory interventions and recognize the necessarily subjective element that enters into such choices.

Recognizing the subjective basis which a decision to try to induce a group to remain in conformity with the dictates of rational models of informed choice carries the risk that one will be guilty of the very offense that he or she

seeks to address. The net effect of an act of suasory intervention, therefore, could well be to worsen an already undesirable situation. Consequently, the individual who chooses to intervene must be concerned about the accuracy of his or her own perception that the condition of interest is, in fact, detracting from a group's ability to perform the functions that promote effective decision-making.[35] Otherwise, not only might the effort be misdirected, it could conceivably do more harm than good.

KNOWLEDGE NEEDS

Having presented a perspective on the proper domain of suasory influence in decision-making discussions and having attempted to distinguish it from the promotion of positions on substantive issues, I regret that I am unable at this juncture to provide comparable specificity in relation to the means by which one can enhance his or her effectiveness. Efforts directed toward the reorientation of group members toward the performance of a decisional task may be so subtle as to go unnoticed, so weakly understated as to go unheeded, or so direct as to arouse animosity toward the initiator.[36] Moreover, in groups with a continuing existence, a person who tries to champion the cause of proper analysis might develop a reputation as a malcontent or, worse, become an object of ridicule. One can probably safely assume that the members of most decision-making groups see themselves as performing acceptably; hence, the suggestion that they are not is unlikely to be taken agreeably or with much enthusiasm. The way in which one approaches these matters, therefore, is crucial to the likelihood of success.

Unfortunately, research on communication in the small group provides few clues concerning the best ways of altering behavioral patterns of group members that either reflect or contribute to their analytical weaknesses. In addition, because of the participants' active involvement in, and often strong feelings about, the issues, suasory tactics typically employed in communicating with

a passive and/or unsophisticated audience have doubtful applicability.[37] A potentially fruitful area for future research, therefore, is the examination of the relative effectiveness of alternative modes of suasory influence in the types of situations which I have been discussing. Not only would such investigations further illuminate our understanding of communication, their yield could prove to be of significant practical value. Given the serious consequences that can follow from the decisions that groups make, attempting to discover useful preventive measures seems a worthy investment of our time.

ENDNOTES

1 Presumably, one conducts an inquiry to determine what argument or set of arguments is best supported by available knowledge and information. In contrast, those who engage in various forms of suasory communication advance arguments, however they may have arrived at their positions initially. I should point out here that throughout this essay, I shall be using the term suasory influence to designate the broad class of strategies and tactics that individuals frequently employ to achieve voluntary acquiescence from others with whom they are in apparent or implicit disagreement. I further distinguish suasory influence as a sub-class of counteractive influence, which I use to refer to any effort intentionally or unintentionally undertaken that changes the direction in which a group is moving. Such initiatives need not necessarily have acquiescence as their objective. See Dennis S. Gouran, Making Decisions in Groups: Choices and Consequences (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1982), pp. 148-72.

2 The discussion as inquiry view appeared early in the history of communication education and was promoted in major textbooks of the time. See, for example, James H. McBurney and Kenneth G. Hance, The Principles and Methods of Discussion (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939); Henry L. Ewbank and J. Jeffery Auer, Discussion and Debate (New York: F. S. Crofts, 1941). Symptomatic of the disagreements concerning the role of persuasion in group discussion were such essays as the following two: Franklyn S. Haiman, "Democratic Ethics and the Hidden Persuaders," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 44 (1958), 385-92; Thorrel B. Fest, "The Place of Persuasion," Western Speech, 22 (1958), 141-48.

3 The impact of Berlo's important book on communication was to change the emphasis from prescriptive views of communicative practice to the processes into which such practices enter. See David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication

(New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

[4] The nature of this controversy is carefully reviewed by Scheffler and the issue in dispute effectively stated by Morgan in his observation that "researchers make knowledge" (p. 7). See Israel Scheffler, Science and Subjectivity (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967); Gareth Morgan, ed., Beyond Method (Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1983).

[5] See, for instance, the review of research on problem-solving in groups in L. Richard Hoffman, "Group Problem Solving," in Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, ed. Leonard Berkowitz, II (New York: Academic Press, 1965), 99-132. Hoffman cites a number of studies indicating that suasory influence frequently impairs the ability of a group to choose appropriately among alternative solutions to problems.

[6] See Irving L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972). Janis' views were given further support in the research that he did for the revised edition. See Groupthink, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982).

[7] See John Dewey, How We Think (Boston: Heath, 1910). See also Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann, Decision Making (New York: Free Press, 1977), p. 11. Janis and Mann develop a set of seven functions that decision-makers should attempt to fulfill in making consequential choices. These consist of thoroughly canvassing the range of options, surveying the objectives to be achieved and the values suggested by different choices, weighing the costs against expected benefits, searching for new information with which to evaluate alternatives, assimilating information correctly in relation to the alternatives it best supports, reexamining the possible negative and positive consequences of each possible choice, and making plans for implementation of the chosen alternative.

[8] See Janis, Victims of Groupthink, pp. 207-24.

[9] This assumes, of course, that the group has an analytical scheme which permits the evaluation of the merits of competing alternatives on the basis of established criteria and decisional rules concerning what information pertinent to the alternatives must reveal to satisfy any given criterion. A good illustration of this is the legal notion that to declare one guilty of certain classes of offenses, evidence must establish motive, opportunity, and presence at the scene. In the absence of this sort of scheme, the major function of suasory influence may well be to encourage the group to adopt one.

[10] In every case, I am assuming that there is at least one group member who is sensitive to the problem. If this condition does not obtain, then, of course, what I am proposing has no application.

[11] See, for example, Arthur M. Cohen and Warren G. Bennis, "Predicting Organization in Changed Communication Networks," Journal of Psychology, 54 (1962), 391-416; Gerald H. Shure, Miles S. Rogers, Ida M. Larsen, and Jack Tassone, "Group Planning and Task Effectiveness," Sociometry, 25 (1962), 263-82.

[12] Putnam has found that individuals vary considerably in their preferences for given procedural orders and that some are more tolerant than others of variations in approach to problem-solving situations; however, there is no evidence that non-order is as effective as some degree of order. See Linda L. Putnam, "Preference for Procedural Order in Task-Oriented Small Groups," Communication Monographs, 46 (1979), 193-218.

[13] See, for example, treatments of problem-solving sequences in Janis and Mann, pp. 405-09; Gerald M. Phillips, Communication and the Small Group (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), pp. 72-108; Thomas M. Scheidel and Laura Crowell, Discussing and Deciding (New York: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 16-54; Janice Gross Stein and Raymond Tanter, Rational Decision-Making: Israel's

Security Choices, 1967 (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1980, pp. 3-90.

14 See Janis and Mann's discussion of the balance sheet procedure, pp. 405-09.

15 See, for example, J. William Fulbright, The Arrogance of Power (New York: Random House, 1966); C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Imperial Presidency (New York: Popular Library, 1973).

16 See Paul V. Crosbie, ed., Interaction in Small Groups (New York: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 177-85.

17 See James T. Tedeschi, ed., The Social Influence Processes (Chicago: Aldene · Atherton, 1972); Harold H. Kelley, "Communication in Experimentally Created Hierarchies," Human Relations, 4 (1951), 39-56; Stanley Milgram, Obedience to Authority (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1969).

18 John R. P. French, Jr., "A Formal Theory of Social Power," Psychological Review, 63 (1956), 181-94. See also E. Paul Torrance, "Some Consequences of Power Differences on Decision-Making in Permanent and Temporary Three-Man Groups," Research Studies, University of Washington, 22 (1954), 413-20.

19 See J. Stacy Adams and Antone K. Romney, "A Functional Analysis of Authority," Psychological Review, 66 (1959), 234-51.

20 For discussions of these cases, see: Janis, Victims of Groupthink, pp. 14-49; Dennis S. Gouran, "The Watergate Cover-Up: Its Dynamics and Its Implications," Communication Monographs, 43 (1976), 176-86; Richard G. Head, Frisco W. Short, and Robert C. McFarlane, Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decision Making in the Mayaguez and Korean Confrontations (Boulder, Colorado: Westview

Press, 1978).

21 For an excellent theoretical discussion of why such reactions are likely to occur, see Leon Festinger, "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes," Human Relations, 7 (1954), 117-40.

22 Stanley Schacter, "Deviation, Rejection, and Communication," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 46 (1951), 190-207.

23 This phenomenon was even noted in the pioneering work of Asch. See Solomon E. Asch, "Studies of Independence and Conformity," Psychological Monographs, 70 (No. 9, 1956), whole no. 416.

24 Studies showing that deviant behavior is tolerated and even influential in some situations include: Patricia Hayes Bradley, C. Mac Hamon, and Alan M. Harris, "Dissent in Small Groups," Journal of Communication, 26 (No. 4, 1976), 155-59; R. Victor Harnack, "A Study of the Effect of an Organized Minority upon a Discussion Group," Journal of Communication, 13 (1963), 12-24; Kristin Valentine and B. Aubrey Fisher, "An Interaction Analysis of Innovative Deviance in Small Groups," Speech Monographs, 41 (1974), 413-20.

25 Elizabeth F. Loftus, Eyewitness Testimony (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), p. 5.

26 See the previously mentioned studies by Bradley et al., Harnack, and Valentine and Fisher.

27 See Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross, Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1980). See also Robin Hogarth, Judgment and Choice (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980); Thomas S. Wallsten, ed., Cognitive Processes in Choice and Decision Behavior

(Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980); Robert S. Wyer, Jr. and Donald E. Carlston, Social Cognition, Inference, and Attribution (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979).

28 This possibility becomes more clear when one considers the influence that individuals have on one another in the creation of cognitions that may be salient at the moment of judgment. See Loftus and Wyer and Carlston. See also Dennis S. Gouran, "Cognitive Sources of Inferential Error and the Contributing Influence of Interaction Characteristics in Decision-Making Groups," in Dimensions of Argument: Proceedings of the Second Summer Conference on Argumentation, ed. George Ziegelmueller and Jack Rhodes (Annandale, Virginia: Speech Communication Association, 1981), pp. 749-69.

29 Some of the support functions of computer technology for human decision-making have recently been discussed by Huber. See George P. Huber, "Issues in the Design of Group Decision Support Systems," an unpublished manuscript presented at the Hawaiian International Conference on Systems Sciences, Honolulu, Hawaii, July, 1983.

30 Dennis S. Gouran, "Communicative Influences on Inferential Judgments in Decision-Making Groups: A Descriptive Analysis," in Argument in Transition: Proceedings of the Third Summer Conference on Argumentation, ed. David Zarefsky, Malcolm O. Sillars, and Jack Rhodes (Annandale, Virginia: Speech Communication Association, 1983), pp. 667-684.

31 For a very good review of the influence of stereotypes on judgment and related perceptual processes, see Loftus, pp. 33-51.

32 This problem has been suggested in clinical work revealing that clinicians often misdiagnose symptoms because of the beliefs that make up their

premises. See Theordore Sarbin, Clinical Inference and Cognitive Theory (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

33 See Martin F. Kaplan, "Judgment by Juries," in Human Judgment and Decision Processes, ed. Martin F. Kaplan and Steven Schwartz (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 31-56.

34 James H. Davis, Craig E. Spitzer, Dennis H. Nagao, and Garold Stasser, "Bias in Social Decisions by Individuals and Groups: An Example from Mock Juries," in Dynamics of Group Decisions, ed. Hermann Brandstätter, James H. Davis, and Heinz Schuler (Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1978), pp. 33-52.

35 These functions have been most clearly identified by Janis and Mann. See note 7.

36 This sort of response is suggested by reactance theory. See Jack W. Brehm, A Theory of Psychological Reactance (New York: Academic Press, 1966).

37 It may be possible to draw on existing theories of social influence in formulating general principles, but the direct applicability of that body of theory to the problem at hand remains to be demonstrated.